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UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE
Radio Service
OFFICE OF INFORMATION

HOMEMAKERS' CHAT WEDNESDAY, May 24, 1939.

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SUBJECT: "WOMAN'S WORK." Information from the Office of Experiment Stations, United States Department of Agriculture.

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When summer weather tempts you outdoors, you may ask yourself if you haven't been spending too much time at housework. You may begin to wonder how much time a woman really should spend on household duties after all. You may wish you knew how much time other housewives put in at the job, and whether the old saying still holds true that "man works from sun to sun but woman's work is never done."

A good many people have asked these questions--so many, in fact, that experiment stations in different States have made time-studies of women's work. Some yeats ago rural housewives as far apart as Rhode Island and Oregon kept records of how they spent their time every day for a week. These records State workers gathered and studied. So now you can compare the working hours of other women to your own, if you want to.

To begin with, you may want to know how much time the average housewife spends on all her household jobs together. According to the Rhode Island records, housewives in that State averaged 7 and three-quarter hours a day for 7 days a week. That makes farm homemaking in Rhode Island a 54-hour-a-week job. Some of the women in this State also put in about 5 hours a week on chickens or garden, but most of them reported little or no farmwork. The Oregon housewives, on the other hand, spent a little less time on housework but considerably more helping with farmwork. They averaged 52 hours a week on housework and 12 hours on farmwork.

Perhaps you've wondered how much time the average woman spends on the job

of feeding her family. Both Eastern and Western housewives agree that this is the household job that takes the most time. Counting preparing and serving meals as well as clearing up and washing dishes, Rhode Island women averaged 3 and a half hours a day, or more than 24 hours a week at this job. Oregon women averaged less--3 hours a day or 21 hours a week on food work. Of course, women with large families or those who did a great deal of baking and canning spent much more time on food than this average time. By the way, here's an interesting East and West contrast: Rhode Island housewives spent more time clearing up and washing dishes than getting meals. In Oregon it was just the reverse. Food preparation took twice as long as clearing up. The reason may be that Oregon women did more canning and baking. In many cases their houses were smaller so clearing up was a quicker job.

Next to work connected with food, work connected with clothing appears to be the job that takes the most time. In spite of all the readymade clothes that farm families wear these days, housewives still do a good deal of sewing and mending. Rhode Island women averaged 7 hours a week on sewing. Of course, some of this was fancy work like embroidery and crocheting which is often considered recreation. But in many families, the piled-up mending basket and the dressmaking in spring and fall accounted for many busy hours.

Many Rhode Island women sent their laundry out, so listed very little time for washing and ironing. But Oregon women regularly gave one half-day a week to washing, another to ironing and mending, and a third to sewing. So in Oregon clothing work altogether added up to more than 11 hours a week.

What about cleaning the house? Both eastern and western women reported about an hour a day for cleaning. Besides this they allowed several full days in spring and fall for seasonal housecleaning.

In every family where there were young children or invalids to care for, the working hours of the housewife were much longer than average. In fact, women with small children and no help hardly knew the meaning of "free" time. Oregon women reported that a baby under a year old took 3 times as much time as a child between 1 and 6, and 12 times as much as a school child.

As you might expect, the seasons made a difference, too, in women's work. In summer women spent more hours in laundering and canning; in winter they spent more time in sewing. Oregon women said their peak load of work came in midsummer and that Christmas was the next busiest time.

Well, that's a brief picture of the working time of rural housewives, East and West. Perhaps if these same women reported today, the picture might be slightly different. More of them probably have electricity and running water and the other conveniences that help cut down housekeeping time. But at least this picture gives you a basis for comparison when you begin to wonder if you spend more hours at housework than the average woman.

(Next week I'll bring you news of the working hours of housewives with outside jobs.)

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